

Last night, I attended the second annual Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Pride Month Reception at the White House. Accompanying me was Fort Lauderdale activist Michael Albetta, President of the Florida Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Democratic Caucus. Mr. Albetta has been an outspoken advocate for equality throughout the State of Florida over the past 13 years, injecting new life into the Dolphin Democrats, a Democratic LGBT rights organization based in South Florida.

Elected officials, state and local community leaders, and LGBT Americans from across the nation were invited to join President Obama and Vice-President Biden at the White House LGBT Pride Month Reception, which is held each June in commemoration of LGBT Pride Month.

Just over 40 years ago, the so-called Stonewall Riots, during which members of the gay community openly challenged institutionalized homophobia, marked the beginning of the modern LGBT rights movement and led to the formation of gay rights organizations across the United States and around the world. Each June, we commemorate this ongoing struggle for equality by celebrating LGBT Pride Month.

We must ensure that the pages of history only continue to turn forward on equality for all Americans, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. This LGBT Pride Month, I reaffirm my resolve to achieve equal rights for LGBT Americans and nothing less because it is the right thing to do.

During the event, President Obama also announced that the Department of Labor, under the *Family and Medical Leave Act*, will now allow gay and lesbian workers to take up to 12 months of unpaid leave per year in order to care for a newborn or sick partner or child. Furthermore, an employee in a same-sex relationship can qualify for leave to care for the sick child of his or her partner even if the worker has not officially adopted the child.

I commend President Obama and his administration for taking meaningful steps toward achieving LGBT equality. This nation can only truly prosper when all of its citizens are guaranteed equal protection under the law and our work is far from over. It is my sincere hope that President Obama, Congress, and our nation as a whole will work together to repeal 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' once and for all, pass the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA), repeal the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), and finally extend all the rights, benefits, and protections that all Americans should be afforded.